

1982

Parental perception of nursery school education

Ömür Bozkurt
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©1982 Ömür Bozkurt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>

Recommended Citation

Bozkurt, Ömür, "Parental perception of nursery school education" (1982). *Graduate Research Papers*. 2122.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2122>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Parental perception of nursery school education

Abstract

Early childhood education has been a part of man's history for many years. Psychologists have pointed out that the first four or five years of a child's life is the period of most rapid growth and greatest susceptibility to environmental influences. Early childhood educators have been equally outspoken regarding the need for early childhood programs to supplement the home experience of children between the ages of three and six years. Evidence suggests that early childhood programs have positive effects on the child (Moore, 1978). Parents enroll their children into early childhood programs for different reasons such as socialization, education or only custodial care. An important factor determining whether a parent enrolls a child to a certain program depends on the parents' perception toward that early educational program.

PARENTAL PERCEPTION OF NURSERY SCHOOL EDUCATION

A Research Paper

Presented to

Dr. Lawrence L. Kavich

Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations
University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Education

by

ÖMÜR BOZKURT

December 1982

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
LIST OF TABLES	i
CHAPTER	
1. THE PROBLEM	1
INTRODUCTION	1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	3
HYPOTHESES	4
DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS	4
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	5
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	6
3. DESIGN OF THE STUDY	9
PROCEDURES TO BE USED	9
DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE	10
INSTRUMENTATION	10
EMPIRICAL PROCEDURE	11
HYPOTHESES FACTORS	12
4. ANALYSIS OF DATA	13
5. SUMMARY	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25
APPENDIX	

TABLES

	<u>PAGE</u>
Table 1- Characteristics of the Subjects	14
Table 2- Percentages of Parental Values of Preschool Education	18
Table 3- Correlation Coefficient	19
Table 4- Analysis of Variance of Mean Differences on the Parental Educational Levels	20
Table 5- Parental Reasons for Sending Children to Nursery School	20
Table 6- Parental Values of Objectives of Nursery School Education	21

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education has been a part of man's history for many years. Psychologists have pointed out that the first four or five years of a child's life is the period of most rapid growth and greatest susceptibility to environmental influences. Early childhood educators have been equally outspoken regarding the need for early childhood programs to supplement the home experience of children between the ages of three and six years¹. Evidence suggests that early childhood programs have positive effects on the child (Moore, 1978). Parents enroll their children into early childhood programs for different reasons such as socialization, education or only custodial care. An important factor determining whether a parent enrolls a child to a certain program depends on the parents' perception toward that early educational program.

¹ Annie L. Butler, Early Childhood Education: Planning and administering Programs (New York: Von Nostrand, 1974), p.1.

Much of the knowledge forming the basis of present early educational programs originated in the university-affiliated nursery schools which relied heavily on psychology. The nursery school movement was originally structured for the purpose of studying the growth of children and for serving as a laboratory for teaching child development and family life. It has developed over the years into a careful program which seeks to include the psychological, physical and social aspects of the home and the school and to integrate the two institutions².

This study will primarily deal with nursery school education which includes mainly children of three and four years of age. Besides providing social environment, one of the important goals of the nursery schools as opposed to day care or family care centers is to offer educational experiences (Maxim, 1980). This may be an important factor for the parents who send their children to nursery schools.

There is limited research related to how parents perceive the educational aspect of nursery school programs. Research indicated that we need more evidence to determine such educational perceptions of parents as determined by a related ERIC research (1975-1981) conducted during the Spring

²Chesteen Hillard, Effectiveness of the Head Start Program in Enhancing School of Readiness of Culturally Deprived Children, U.S.Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 020 771, 1966.

Semester, 1981. It is the purpose of this investigation to gain more knowledge and insight about parental perceptions.

Furthermore, the results of this study will bring about awareness of how parents perceive nursery school education. In summary, the teachers and the administrators of nursery schools will be able to work more efficiently with parents.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is the purpose of this descriptive study to investigate selected parental perception of nursery school education in Cedar Falls nursery schools to improve such programs.

A normative survey is used to gather related information involving sample of six nursery schools in the university community.

The primary survey questions to be answered by this study are:

- 1- Do parents value nursery school education in relation to their educational levels?
- 2- Is there any relationship between how they value nursery school education and the reason they enroll their children into these programs?
- 3- What are the important reasons for sending their children to nursery schools?

A high educational level is expected for the parents of the nursery school children. Also a correlation between the parents' educational level and the evaluation of preschool education is anticipated. Reasons for sending their children to nursery schools will also be analyzed.

HYPOTHESES

Three hypotheses will be tested and analyzed:

H₁: Parents with higher educational levels are more likely to send their children to nursery school than day cares,

H₂: There is no significant difference in parental age, educational level and how they perceive preschool education.

H₃: Intellectual stimulation is the reason most parents send their children to nursery schools.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Nursery School - A school which offers a valuable supervised educational experience for 3 and 4-year old children; gives the child the opportunity to learn to use his body, to express himself/herself, to cope with his own feelings and emotions, to develop relationships within his peer group and to satisfy his curiosity; each nursery school program is

adapted to the child³.

Preschool Education - The method and theory of guiding young children in a group, generally referring to education demonstrated in nursery schools, emphasis is placed on developing capacities of the individual and on helping him to meet the problem⁴.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research purports to study only the perceptions of selected parents who send their children to selected nursery schools in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Six nursery schools were studied, excluding a special Montessori school, Head Start and St. Luke's nursery school because they were not available for original research. The survey mainly deals with the parents' educational levels, ages, and how they value nursery school education.

³ Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education (New York: Mc Graw Hill Company, 1973).

⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature examining the parental perception of nursery school education is limited, as a result it will be written around one primary and two secondary sources. The primary source, Buford (1975) examined the perceptions and the attitudes of parents toward early childhood education and related these to several factors. The subjects were 219 parents from parent-teacher organization in Oklahoma.

Overall, it was found that parents held favorable perceptions toward early childhood education. Parents' perceptions were affected by: a) age, b) size of community where respondents have lived for major part of his or her life, c) number of children in the family, d) socioeconomic level, and e) attendance of respondents' children in an early childhood program. Sixty-five percent of the parents thought that emotional growth and psychological development of children were the most important areas. The least important was the physical care of the child⁵.

⁵ Juanita Buford, "Parents' Perceptions of Early Childhood Education" (PhD dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1975).

A secondary research study was conducted in England in six nursery schools, involving parent involvement in nursery school education (Tizard, 1977). The majority of the fathers were manual workers. When the parents were interviewed, it was found that the most frequently mentioned reason for sending the child to a nursery school was to mix with other children and that many parents do not differentiate between playgroup nurseries and nursery schools. Equally, the most frequently mentioned gain from nursery school attendance was social- getting on better with other children and adults. Parents also did not expect nursery school to provide other than socializing experiences⁶.

Another secondary research was conducted by Haystead on nursery school in Scotland. In the interviews, it was found that the benefits of the nursery school education ranged from having the opportunity to play with other children of their own age (61 %), being in the company of their friends from the neighborhood (6 %), taking them away from the home environment which they were now finding boring (7 %), preparation for school (24 %) and a training in being independent (4 %). However, 5 % mentioned that there were better facilities at the nursery school or class than they could provide at home and 9 % said that there was nowhere for the child to play at home⁷.

⁶ Barbara Tizard, "No Common Ground", Times (London) Educational Supplement, May 27, 1977, pp.15-16.

⁷ J. Haystead, Preschool Education and Care, Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1980, p.77.

Three ERIC studies were conducted to find sources for the review of literature. Aside from one study "Parents' Expectations vis-a-vis Nursery School" by Nicole Zoberman which the author was unable to obtain, the study has to depend on stated three sources.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

PROCEDURES TO BE USED

This is a normative, descriptive study investigating the relation between the parental age, education and occupation and parental perception of nursery school education. Descriptive research describes and interprets what is. It is concerned with conditions and relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing (Best, 1970). The study uses demographic data such as age, education, occupation family status and number of children who attended nursery school in the family.

All nursery schools in the university community of Cedar Falls, Iowa were used in the survey, excluding special schools like Head Start and Montessori. Questionnaires with the cover letter explaining the research were distributed to the directors of the nursery schools then were sent home with

the children. Either the mother or the father was asked to complete the questionnaire and return it to the nursery school. The data were obtained during the month of May, 1981. Of the given 342 questionnaires, 240 or 71 % were returned and used for the computer analysis.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The 240 subjects of this study were obtained from six nursery schools in the university community. The nursery schools were Bryan Preschool, Jack and Jill Preschool, Merry-Land Nursery, Nazareth Lutheran Preschool, Peter Pan Preschool and Play School Child Care. The subjects were parents of nursery school children who were enrolled in selected schools. All selected nursery schools are privately owned and represent middle class or upper middle class families in Cedar Falls, Iowa.

INSTRUMENTATION

A normative survey was used to assess the relation between parental education level and parental perception of nursery school education. In the first part of the questionnaire, items were included to gather demographic data. They include family status, education level, occupation, age, number of children in nursery school, their ages and time period they attended nursery school.

The last three items of the study include ranking of reasons for sending children to nursery schools and objectives in nursery school education. The last item uses Likert Method of Summated Ratings to assess parental values of preschool education.

The general reliability and validity of the instrument related to the fact that, the study uses all nursery schools in Cedar Falls excluding special schools, Head Start and Montessori. St. Luke's Preschool was not used because of unavailability of data. The survey was given to a panel of research experts at the university. A follow-up was used after two weeks the questionnaires were distributed to nursery school directors. As a result, out of 342 questionnaires, 240 responses, a 71 %, were recieved. Specific reliability coefficient was computed for items ten and eleven, the related computations indicated nil results.

EMPIRICAL PROCEDURE

To analyze and interpret the data, Spearman correlations were computed between four variables, parents' age, parents' education, the reason parents send their children to nursery schools and their evaluation of preschool education. The data also contains Pearson correlation between parents' reason for sending their child to a nursery school and their evaluation of nursery school education. Mann-Whitney test was used to look at the relation between the parents' educational

level and number of older children in the family who attended nursery schools. Percentages were calculated for each question for the reasons parents send their children to nursery schools.

HYPOTHESES FACTORS

The first hypothesis regarding educational levels of the parents and nursery school education will be analyzed by the percentages calculated from the questionnaire. The second hypothesis stating, no difference in the parents' ages, educational levels and their perception of preschool education will be proven or disproven by calculated correlations in chapter four. The third hypothesis, reason for sending children to nursery schools, will be analyzed by the means calculated from the rankings.

SUMMARY

A normative survey was used in this study to assess the relation between parental education level and parental perception of nursery school education. The 240 subjects of this study were obtained from six nursery schools in the university community. Items were included to gather demographic data and to assess parental values of preschool education. Percentages, Spearman correlations, Pearson correlations and Mann-Whitney test were used to analyze and interpret data.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter will have series of tables that have been derived from the questionnaire. These tables will be briefly discussed and analyzed in the chapter. The tables do not report the number of cases because of the missing cases, percentages are adjusted to those that are available.

Table 1 presents the description of the subjects in the study. Two hundred forty-three subjects were parents of children who attended six nursery schools in the university area. The respondents were between the ages of nineteen to over forty, with 69.9 male percent and 79.1 female percent falling in the age category 25-34. Fifty-eight per cent of the fathers were "high school graduates" where 38.3 per cent of the mothers were "high school graduates". The next largest percentages were distributed as: "college graduates" 48 per cent, "degrees after college" 44 per cent, and "attended college" 41 per cent for the fathers. In mothers' categories second largest proportion were in both "attended college" 15.7 per cent and "college graduates" 15.7 per cent respectively. The sample was predominantly two-parent family (93.7

per cent). Only 7.1 per cent of the population had two children enrolled in a nursery school compared to only one (92.9 per cent). Approximately 44.0 per cent of the population had older children who attended nursery school. Forty-five per cent of the sample intended to send their younger children to a nursery school.

TABLE 1
Characteristics of The Subjects

Variable	Classification	Percent
Age (Male)	19-24	1.3
	25-34	69.9
	35-40	23.0
	Over 40	5.8
Age (Female)	19-24	5.1
	25-34	79.1
	35-40	14.5
	Over 40	1.3
Education (Male)	Elementary	0.4
	Junior High	0.4
	High School	25.6
	Trade School	15.0
	Attended College	18.1
	Completed College	21.1
	Courses after College	19.4

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Education (Female)	Elementary	0.9
	Junior High	38.3
	High School	15.3
	Trade School	15.7
	Attended College	15.7
	Completed College	15.7
	Courses after College	14.0
Family Status	One-parent	6.3
	Two-parent	93.7
Occupation (Male)	Engineer, Architect	9.7
	Social Sciences	0.9
	Medicine, health	3.2
	Education	5.1
	Writing	0.5
	Art	0.5
	Administrative specialization	5.1
	Managers and officers	16.6
	Misc. prof. technical occupations	1.8
	Computing, account recording	0.5
	Production and stock clerks	0.9
	Information and message distribution	0.5
	Sales occupations, services	3.7
	consummable commodities	1.4
	commodities	0.9

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Miscellaneous sales occupations	0.9
Domestic services	0.5
Food and beverage preparation	0.9
Barbering	0.5
Protective services	0.9
Building related service occupation	2.3
Plant farming	1.4
Occupation in processing chemicals	0.5
Metal machining	14.3
Metal work	0.5
Mechanics, machine repair	7.4
Wood machining	0.5
Fabrication, assembly, repairment	4.1
Assembly, repair of electrical equipment	0.5
Fabrication and repair of wood	0.5
Repair of sand, stone, clay, glass	0.5
Welder, cutler	0.5
Electrical assembling, installation	1.4
Painting, plastering	0.5
Construction	0.5
Transportation	2.3
Production and distribution of utilities	1.4
Amusement, recreation, radio, TV	0.5
Self-employed	2.3

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Occupation (Female) Engineer	0.9
Medicine, health	14.0
Occupation in education	10.2
Occupation in museum, library	3.3
Managers, officials	0.9
Misc. professional, technical occupations	0.9
Stenography, typing	3.3
Computing and account recording	2.8
Production and stock clerks	0.5

The fathers' occupation ranged from manager being the greatest per cent 16.6 to metal machining 14.3 per cent being the second largest. Mothers' occupation ranged from housewife 54.9 per cent to occupation in medicine and health being the second largest percentage (14.0).

The following are the number and percentage of responses returned;

<u>School</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Bryan Preschool	8	67.0
Jack and Jill	86	67.0
Merry-Land	37	74.0
Nazareth Lutheran	22	50.0
Peter pan	70	82.0
Play School	17	77.0

Fifty-five per cent of the population rated preschool education as "extremely valuable" (Table 2).

TABLE 2

Percentages of Parental Values of Preschool Education

Extremely valuable	55.0
_____	16.4
Valuable	24.8
_____	1.7
Somewhat valuable	1.7
_____	0.4
Of little value	-
TOTAL	100.00

EXAMINATION OF THE HYPOTHESES

Percentages of parental occupation were calculated for the examination of the first hypothesis.

- 1- Parents with higher educational levels are more likely to send their children to nursery school than day cares.

The percentages indicate that no primary difference existed in parents' perception of nursery school education in accordance with their educational level. As Table 1 shows; highest educational level for both parents was High School, 25.6 per cent for the fathers, and 38.3 for the mothers. The second greatest proportion is in college graduates for both groups (15.7 per cent).

2- There is no significant difference in parents' perception toward preschool education according to each of the following;

a. age

b. educational level of the parents.

Correlation coefficients were calculated for the parents' age, educational level and the value of preschool education. As Table 3 indicates there is no correlation between the variables.

TABLE 3

Variable	R
MOTHER's Age	.0427 (.261)
MOTHER's Education	-.0177 (.395)
FATHER's Age	.0748 (.127)
FATHER's Education	.0373 (.284)

One way analysis of variance was used to look at differences between five educational levels of the parents; high school, trade school, attended college, college graduates and courses after college; and how they value preschool education. As Table 4 indicates an F value of .366 was obtained indicating no significant difference.

TABLE 4

Analysis of Variance of Mean Differences on The Parental Educational Levels

SOURCE	Sum of Squares	d.f.	Mean Squares	F ratio	Level of Sig.
Between groups	1.6459	4	0.4115	.366	.8325
Within groups	247.1354	220	1.1233	.366	.8325
TOTAL	248.7813	224			

3- Intellectual stimulation is the reason most parents send their children to nursery schools.

Percentages were calculated for the parents' ranking of the reason for sending their children to nursery schools. Means were found for each reason. As Table 5 indicates, social adjustment was the most important reason $\bar{x} = 2.038$.

TABLE 5

Parental Reasons for Sending Children To Nursery School

Variable	\bar{x}
Social Adjustment	2.038
Readiness for School	2.644
Intellectual Stimulation	2.754
Development of Independence	3.602
Adjustment to Routine	4.229
Child Care	5.719

Means for the objectives of nursery school education were also calculated. Social adjustment was the most valued objective of nursery school education $\bar{X} = 1.996$.

TABLE 6

Parental Values of Objectives of Nursery School Education

Variable	\bar{X}
Social Adjustment	1.996
Readiness for School	2.534
Intellectual Stimulation	2.866
Development of Independence	3.647
Adjustment to Routine	4.126
Child Care	5.797

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the relationship between parental educational levels and the value of nursery school education. It also analyzed the relationship between the ages, educational levels of the parents and preschool education. The reasons for sending children to nursery school is also analyzed. 242 parents of nursery school children in Cedar Falls, Iowa were asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating the nursery school education.

The results of the study indicate that:

- 1- There is no relationship between the educational level of the parents and how they perceive nursery school education. It is not necessary for the parents to have high educational levels in order to send their children to nursery schools instead of day care centers.
- 2- The correlation coefficient and one way analysis of variance indicate that there is no relationship between age, educational level of the parents and how they

perceive preschool education. However, this cannot be generalized since it is based on data of a small industrial community.

- 3- In analyzing the responses, it was found that the majority of the parents thought that preschool education is extremely important.
- 4- Mathematical means indicate that social adjustment is the most important reason for the parents to send their children to nursery school.

This can be interpreted as parents in general lack adequate knowledge and information about nursery school education which offers educational experiences. Early childhood educational programs including nursery schools should include more parental involvement in their programs.

In completion of this study the author recommends the followings:

- 1- The study needs to be replicated with a larger sample of schools with more parents.
- 2- A more reliable and valid instrument should be developed to measure the parental perception.
- 3- More research is needed in the area of preschool education. This study will be shared with the partici-

pating schools for providing a valuable communication between parents and administrators. Data from the survey would also aid in assessing progress toward program implementation.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Best, John W., Research in Education. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1981.

Buford, Juanita, "Parents' perception of early childhood education". PhD dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1975.

Butler, Annie L., Early Childhood Education: planning and administering programs. New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1974.

Burgess, Evangeline, Values in Early Childhood Education, Department of Elementary, Kindergarten, Nursery Education, National Education Association, Washington D.C., 1965.

Carter, V. Good, Dictionary of Education. New York: Mc Graw Hill Company, 1973.

Evans, Ellis D., Contemporary Influences in Early Childhood Education. New York: Holt, Reinehart and Winston Inc., 1965.

- Leeper, Sarah Hammond, Skipper, Dora Sikes and Witherspoon, Ralph, L., Good Schools for Young Children. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1979.
- Haystead, J., Preschool Education and Care. Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1980.
- Hillard, Chesteen E. Jr., Effectiveness of the Head Start Program in Enhancing School of Readiness of Culturally Deprived Children, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 020 771, 1966.
- Maxim, George W., The Very Young. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1980.
- Moore, Shirley G., "The Persistence of Preschool Effects: A National Collaborative Study", Young Children, March 1978.
- Tizard, Barbara, "No Common Ground". Times, London ed., May 27, 1977.
- White, Florence Anne Pat, Attitudes Toward Education: Involving Administrators, Teachers and Parents in Early Childhood Education Programs, Dissertation Abstracts International, Volume 39, March 1979.

Dear Parent,

Your child's nursery school has been selected for a research study to provide data to improve services to children in conjunction with the Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations at the University of Northern Iowa. Your assistance will be appreciated. We ask that you complete the attached questionnaire and leave it with the nursery teacher at your earliest convenience. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete; no signature is required because of confidentiality. We thank you for your cooperation.

Head, Department of Educational
Psychology and Foundations

Researcher

1. How many children do you currently have enrolled in nursery school?
☐ One ☐ Two ☐ More than two
2. What is/are the age(s) of your child(ren) that are currently enrolled in nursery school?
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
3. How long has your child(ren) been attending nursery school?
☐ Less than one year ☐ One year or more
4. Have any of your older children at one time attended a nursery school?
☐ Yes ☐ No
5. How long did your older child(ren) attend nursery school?
☐ Less than one year ☐ One year or more
6. If there is a younger child at home, do you intend to send him/her to nursery school?
☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Please indicate your family status?
☐ One-parent family ☐ Two-parent family
8. Are there other adults living in the home?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Please indicate the relationship to the nursery school child such as "grandmother"

9. If the father is living in the home with the child/ children, please provide the following information about him:

Age:

☐ 19-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-40 ☐ Over 40

Education (please check highest level completed)

☐ Elementary ☐ Junior High
☐ High school ☐ Trade School
☐ Attended college ☐ Completed college
☐ Courses after college

Occupation: (please be specific)

9. If the mother is living in the home with the child/children, please provide the following information about her:

Age:

☐ 19-24 ☐ 25-34 ☐ 35-40 ☐ Over 40

Education (please check highest level completed)

☐ Elementary ☐ Junior High
☐ High School ☐ Trade School
☐ Attended college ☐ Completed college
☐ Courses after college

Occupation: (please be specific)

10. Please rank (from 1 to 6) in order of importance, the reason you send your child to a nursery school! (for example, place 1 in front of the most important, 2 in front of the next important reason)

- ☐ social adjustment
- ☐ readiness for school
- ☐ intellectual stimulation
- ☐ adjustment to routine
- ☐ development of independence
- ☐ child care

11. Please rank (from 1 to 6) in order of importance, the value of nursery schools from your own point of view.

- ☐ social adjustment
- ☐ readiness for school
- ☐ intellectual stimulation
- ☐ adjustment to routine
- ☐ development of independence
- ☐ child care

12. How valuable do you consider preschool education for your child? (please check only one of the seven boxes)

<input type="checkbox"/> Extremely valuable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> valuable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat valuable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> of little value
--	--------------------------	-----------------------------------	--------------------------	---	--------------------------	---